

## REMARKS

Receipt of the Office Action of December 2, 2003 is gratefully acknowledged.

Claims 4, 6, 7 and 10 were reconsidered and found to be indefinite under 35 USC 112, second paragraph and unpatentable under 35 USC 103(a) over Fukano et al, (Fig. 8) in view of Wendorff and EP 0380 970 A2. In addition, claim 10 has been objected to because of the recitation of "said axially length."

Claim 10 has been amended along with claims 4, 6, and 7 in order to overcome the objection to claim 10 and the indefiniteness rejection. It is believed that claims 4, 6, 7 and 10 are definite and in full compliance with the provisions of 35 USC 112 and that claim 10 should no longer be objectionable.

Claims 10 has also bee amended to better define it over the art now applied. Accordingly, claims 4, 6, 7 and 10 are believed to patentably distinguish over the combination of Fukano et al, Wendorff and EP 0180 970 A2.

The present invention utilizes a two point support arrangement so that the pipe member into which the inner ring is inserted may be connected to the joint body. This arrangement can absorb the generated forces associated with the use of the joint without deformation of the joint, thereby insuring seal safety. The two point support arrangement is now more clearly defined in claim 10, and can be seen in the annotated copy of Fig. 2 which shows the two points of support at X and Y.

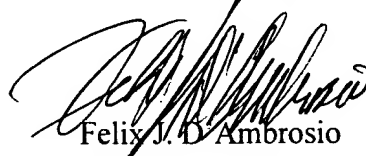
None of the references of record disclose or suggest such a two point support arrangement as is shown and claimed. Note in the annotated copy of Fig. 2 that the sealing occurs at the two ends X and Y and that a gap exists between the receiving port, the pipe member

and a portion of the inner ring. Note that in Fig. 8 of Fukano et al, the gap is terminated at the front end, which would effect the sealing at the Y region

According to the present invention this gap is produced because of the abutment of the projections 9 and the inner peripheral face 4a (Fig. 2). The gap does not end at the region F (annotated Fig. 2) as in Fukano et al. Claim 10 states this relationship.

In view of the foregoing, reconsideration is respectfully requested, the amendment to claim 10 considered and claim 10, along with claims 4, 6 and 7 found allowable.

Respectfully submitted,



Felix J. D. Ambrosio  
Reg. No. 25,721

April 2, 2004

BACON & THOMAS, PLLC  
625 Slater's Lane  
4<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Alexandria, VA 22314 - 1176  
(703) 683-0500